



FIRST THINGS FIRST

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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

New Office of Early Learning

- The U.S. Department of Education recently announced a proposal to create an Office of Early Learning, tasked with overseeing the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grants and coordinating early learning programs across the Department.
- The proposal names Senior Advisor for Early Learning Jacqueline Jones as head of the new office, which will operate within the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE).
- The new office is expected to oversee the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and the administration of several programs that provide support for early learning including Title I, IDEA, and recently established programs such as Promise Neighborhoods and the Investing in Innovation fund.
- As proposed, the Office of Early Learning will operate as a central resource to ensure that support for high-quality early learning and development programs is coordinated within the Department and across federal agencies, in addition to managing outreach to the early learning community. Further details on staffing and office operations will be available in the coming months.

Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction

- The Joint Select Committee – also known as the super committee – is a congressional panel made up of 12 members—six Democrats and six Republicans, with six members from the House and six from the Senate—established to cut \$1.5 trillion from the federal budget over the next 10 years.
- The panel, created in the summer after political wrangling over the debt ceiling, has until November 23rd to vote on the proposal to cut \$1.5 trillion over 10 years.
- Cuts can include discretionary, mandatory, and entitlement programs. Although no specific proposals from the committee have been released, there is the potential that cuts could include Head Start, child care, and K-12 education.
- The full Congress has until December 23rd for an up-or-down vote on the bill. On January 15th, if the panel's recommendation fails to clear Congress, then "triggers" leading to \$1.2 trillion in future cuts go into effect.
- These so-called automatic cuts, which would cut \$600 billion from the Pentagon's budget, would take effect in early 2013. It is possible that the committee could recommend only a portion of the required minimum cuts, and delay decisions on the remaining amount until next year. This scenario would give committees of jurisdiction time to work out details of the balance.

Child Care Subsidies

- Generally, Arizona's child care subsidies are funded by three sources: the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants, and the state's General Fund.
- The State's FY 2012 budget eliminated General Fund appropriation for the Department of Economic Security's Child Care Administration.
- In order to continue to "draw down" available federal dollars, Arizona would need to contribute approximately \$30 million to leverage approximately \$40 million. Historically, this match has come from the General Fund and utilized by the DES Child Care Administration.
- After extensive dialogue with the Governor's Office and DES on possible solutions to the potential loss of federal matching dollars for child care subsidies in the state – FTF's CEO signed a Memorandum of Agreement with DES.
- The MOA allows DES to claim expenditures made by FTF for CCDF matching purposes not to exceed \$30 million dollars in a given FTF funding fiscal year.
- Additionally the cover memo specifies that DES will maintain subsidy enrollment at an average of 27,000.
- The MOA also articulates that the two agencies agree to work collaboratively to explore policies and strategies that could link CCDF to Quality First, thus ensuring that children with high needs are served in measurable, high quality environments.

Communications & Government Affairs Committee

- FTF Government Affairs presented a draft work plan for the next year to the committee. The committee reviewed the plan and offered specific feedback during their most recent meeting.
- The plan outlines operational goals to strengthen policymaker outreach and awareness activities, build and strengthen the government relations capacity of FTF Regional Partnership Councils and staff, strengthen internal communication and coordination in the government relations arena, and to build long term strategic relationships with federal agencies and NGOs.

Check Tour

- This year's check tour has seen steady participation by local and state policymakers. FTF Government Affairs and Community Outreach are working together to identify and track policymakers who have participated in this year's check tour events.

FTF Board Appointments

- There are several vacancies on the FTF Board that await appointments from the Governor. Ensuring that these vacancies are filled is important to the effective governance of the agency. As such, FTF Government Affairs is actively working with the Governor's Office to facilitate this process. The most recent conversations with the Governor's Office give some indication that we may see movement shortly.